

03.01.22

Distinguished members of the Housing Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony today on **S.B. 168 An Act Establishing a Right to Housing**. I would like to

My name is Caroline Beltre, I am a resident of Wallingford, CT, up until 02.14.22, I was unstably housed. I had been homeless and unstably housed for almost 6 years. Five of those years, here in CT, specifically, Meriden and Cromwell. I arrived in CT, January 2017 as a domestic violence victim. I entered the local domestic violence shelter and my journey of obtaining stable, affordable and fair housing began. I had a part-time job that I worked for quite some time as I worked on my financial, physical, mental and emotional health. As I tried to obtain housing by applying for whatever housing authority had an open wait list, I worked on my credit which had been damaged while being in a domestic violence relationship. I was informed by Bristol Housing Authority that my name had come-up on the list, I was absolutely elated, only to be told I could not be given housing because I was a medical marijuana patient. I was devastated. I couldn't believe that I was being told, you don't have the right to housing because of how you choose to treat your Fibromyalgia, PTSD, depression, anxiety and postherpetic neuralgia from the shingles. My time at the transitional living house was almost up and while I did find another "transitional living house", it was anything but. The person running the program was a fraud and Caroline was yet again left wondering where she was going to live. Again, the domestic violence agency I was previously working with in conjunction with a church in the community, helped me and provided me with a place to stay. What was supposed to be 6 months, turned into 15 months due to the pandemic. I was contacted by New haven Housing (Elm City Communities) who informed me my name had come up on their list, this time, I was only cautiously excited. I went through the orientation and began looking for an apartment, only to again deal with being asked for a 700+ credit, a co-signer with a home and excellent credit as well as the criteria that my income needed to be 39x my monthly rent in order to be considered. Again, a punch to the gut. I couldn't understand how someone who had lost everything, escaped an abusive relationship, gotten her life back together, could still be facing so many housing barriers???

I was angry, hurt, confused, disgusted and so many other emotions. What else did I need to do? My credit wasn't where it needed to be although I had obtained full time employment as a case manager for homeless and runaway youth, I was still having trouble making ends meet. I simply could not afford an apartment on what I was making. Finally, Wallingford Housing came through and I finally obtained permanent, stable and safe housing 02.14.22

I tell you all this to say, I fully support and ask you to pass **S.B. 168 an Act Establishing a Right to Housing**. As a person with years of lived experience related to homelessness, housing instability and housing discrimination it should never have taken almost 6 years for me to obtain housing. As a person who was vulnerable, broken and down, I shouldn't have had to go through all I did to obtain stable housing. It is absolutely vital to address the barriers that domestic violence victims and other groups face on a daily basis in an effort to end homelessness in Connecticut.

Thank you for your time and please consider passing this act in an effort to bring homelessness.

Caroline Beltre